**Grant Proposal Writing: Elements for Success**


Strategic Management of Change

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**ABSTRACT**

This research project investigated and evaluated elements of successful grant proposal writing.  The Richmond Fire Department strives to maintain a high level of service to its customers by providing a diverse array of services to the community. When new challenges or responsibilities arise, new techniques and resources to meet these challenges are quickly embraced.  The problem was funding had not kept pace with the needs of the department to properly meet the challenges it faced while maintaining the delivery of efficient, professional, and innovative levels of service.

The purpose of this research was to identify the process to successfully fund programs through the use of grants.  The evaluative research method was used to discuss the process an organization should follow in order to receive funding from grants.  This was used to answer these three questions: What are the initial factors an organization should consider when beginning the grant proposal process?  What are the main components of a grant proposal? What are the elements that affect a grant proposal being funded or not?

To complete the research project, a grant proposal writing workshop was attended, literature was reviewed and informal discussions were held with fire department members.  The result of the research indicated the fire department could become successful at receiving funding from grant proposals.  The fire department should implement a program for development of ideas for grant proposals.  The key points of the recommended program are listed below:

1. Organize frequent brainstorming sessions among members.  All participants should be allowed to express problems and needs.  They should also be encouraged to offer solutions to the problems and needs.

2. From the brainstorming sessions, develop a focus group to thoroughly analyze ideas that are deemed important by those at the brainstorming sessions.  They should analyze the concept of the program or purchase for relevance to the fire department's goals and likelihood of the program being accomplished.

3. Basic training in grant proposal writing should be provided to key personnel who have a good knowledge base of varied areas of the fire service.

4. Develop a format for financial records which will allow quick access to cost information.  Personnel cost, operating cost and supply cost are some of the information to be maintained for ease of budget calculations when preparing proposals.

5. Develop a sample grant proposal for the fire department.  This should provide each grant proposal writer with accurate and consistent information about the department, its history, accomplishments and mission.

6. Have all grant proposals reviewed by a person or persons from outside the department.  A person with some knowledge of both the fire service and the funding agency would be helpful.  Use any evaluation criteria information provided by the funding agency or a generic set of criteria.

7. Develop a marketing plan.  It should raise public awareness of a program's need and seek community support.

8. Prepare formal guidelines for accepting and receiving of funds, accounting of expenditures and reporting of a program's progress.

9. Evaluate the performance of funded programs in comparison to its initial stated goals. Decisions, such as the request for more funds, can be made from the evaluations.

10. Do not abandon ideas from proposals not funded. Analyze where the proposal may have been weak and develop measures to strengthen the proposal. Then resubmit or submit it to another appropriate funding agency.

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**INTRODUCTION**

The Richmond Fire Department strives to maintain a high level of service to its customers by providing a diverse array of services to the community.  When new challenges or responsibilities arise, new techniques and resources to meet these challenges are quickly embraced.  While a commitment to maintain such services has many faces, one of the most important is funding.  Funding has not kept pace with the need of the department to properly meet the challenges it faces while maintaining the delivery of efficient, professional and innovative levels of service.

The purpose of this research is to identify the process to successfully fund programs through the use of grants.  The evaluative research method will be used to discuss the process an organization should follow in order to receive funding from grants.

This will be done through a literature review and attendance of a grant proposal writing workshop.  The following research questions are posed:

1.  What are the initial factors an organization should consider when beginning the grant proposal process?

2.  What are the main components of a grant proposal?

3.  What are the elements that affect a grant proposal being funded or not?

## BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE

The Richmond Fire Department consists of sixteen full time employees and approximately 20 volunteer members.  This group provides a multitude of services. Some are traditional to the fire service such as fire suppression, rescue, first responder emergency medical services and fire prevention.  The fire prevention section of the department also functions as the building department for the city.  Its functions include plan review, permitting, inspection and code enforcement.

In its effort to maintain professional, efficient and innovative services to the community, members are trained to perform a variety of tasks.  Fire prevention personnel, including the building inspector, are trained as firefighters and emergency medical technicians.  The training is not only to a basic level but in more advanced subjects such as technical rescue.  Fire prevention activities including public education, fire safety inspections and fire investigations are routinely assigned to suppression personnel.  This is possible due to these personnel having received training in these areas.  This amount of dual function helps control labor costs.  Savings in this area of funding are very important.  Growth of the department's annual operating budget has been mostly in the area of full time employee cost.  Some of the services provided are a factor in increasing the actual number of full time employees.  The building department requires a full time inspector for construction inspections and a full time permit clerk to deal with the enormous amount of records and information generated by the building department.  Another factor has been the increased reliance on off-duty full time employees returning to work for incidents.  Richmond is the county seat of Fort Bend County, Texas.  The county is one of the fastest growing counties in the nation.  While

many people move to the area to live the suburban lifestyle, most have family or job commitments that do not allow them to become volunteer members of the department. For this reason, off-duty personnel not only respond to large-scale incidents, but they also respond to routine incidents, serving as a backup crew to the initial response of on-duty personnel. Richmond is an old historic city incorporated under the laws of The Republic of Texas in 1837.

The city faces many revenue problems. One reason being that the city has been largely a residential community with little commercial development. Partly because of its age and partly because it was the first populated city in the county, many residents are of lower socio-economic groups. The city does have some diversity; however, the explosive growth in new residential development has not taken hold in the city as it has in the nearby areas located out of the city. Commercial growth has only started to trickle into the city in the past five to six years. Being the county seat means a large number of county offices are located in Richmond. The county jail, a multi-story building, houses nearly one thousand prisoners. There are three multi-story courthouse/office buildings located in the city, and many other buildings housing departments of county government. As the phenomenal growth of the county continues the size of county government also continues to grow. The ever increasing appetite for space whether it is buildings or parking spaces has seen many blocks and acres of land once taxable by the city become tax exempt. Yet the county government's growth means an increase in demand for services from the city in general and not just the fire department.

The Richmond Fire Department's needs for additional funding are like much of the rest of the fire service. These needs are for funding for specialized training and equipment for such things as technical rescue, initial response to local terrorism and better public education. The Richmond Fire Department has funding needs for local problems as well. With the growth of the area also has come an increase in the number of emergency responses by the fire department. These demands of increased response numbers also cause increases in operating cost. With the do more with less style of funding prevalent in government today, everyday expenses are also feeling the crunch of less funding. As apparatus respond more often and begin to age, the need for replacement becomes more important. In the early 1980's the need to replace an engine was identified. It was not until 1987 that the new engine was placed in service. Its actual cost being spread over two fiscal years. In 1994 the replacement of another engine was needed. It was placed in service in 1997, but funding was a major problem. The fire department did receive its first ever grant monies towards the purchase of the new engine. Approximately sixty percent of the cost of the engine was funded through a block grant from the county's community development department. Even with this help, the balance of the purchase cost and purchase of equipment for the engine was again spread over two fiscal years.

In informal discussions with members of the fire department, several projects were identified that could possibly be items funded by grants. The department has done much technical rescue training. Within the department's area of response are large areas of raw land being developed and the local energy company's largest power generation plant. The area is a second tier county of the Texas Gulf Coast. Hurricanes

have spared the area.  Hurricane Alicia in 1983 was the last to cause extensive damage to the area.  These all added together to present a challenge of increased need for technical rescue, trench rescue in underground utility construction, high angle and confined space rescue in industrial settings and building collapse rescue in the event of a catastrophic weather event.

Another area identified was that of initial response to local terrorism especially in the case of biological and chemical releases.  The county's courts, jail, detention facility and associated agencies all are located within the City of Richmond.  These locations are very possible targets for threats or actual acts of localized terrorism. Previous research by the fire department fire prevention division identified definite need for an all risk safety education program.  A large portion of our population is Hispanic with many persons having only recently immigrated to the United States.  Spanish language safety education programs are needed.  Research indicated the need for the development of a juvenile fire setter program.

The consensus of those involved in these informal discussions was that the fire department needs these programs, but adequate funding is not available through the traditional operating budget.  In many instances efforts have been made to address these needs.  In technical rescue the emphasis to date has been on training.  This is practical since personnel must learn these new techniques in order to perform the service.  Now that the initial education has taken place, funding for equipment and continuous training are needed.  Public education efforts exist, but a coordinated program that addresses the needs of all segments of our community does not exist.

Funding in the form of resources, both materials and personnel, are needed to develop successful public education programs.

Money does not fix all problems; however, identified needs and solutions to problems need money for the solutions to become reality. The Richmond Fire Department must seek alternative funding through grants to be able to continue delivering professional, efficient and innovative services to its customers. Operating budgets will not be able to allow for new programs or continued funding for existing programs.

The mission of the executive fire officer program "to provide senior officers with a broad perspective on various facets of fire administration." (National Fire Academy, 1998) This mission is very well served by the presentation of the Change Management Model in the National Fire Academy Class Strategic Management of Change. While the need for money for programs may not be hard to realize, the problem of what programs have the most needs and will make the biggest impact on our customers can be tricky to decide. Using the analysis phase of the model to assess the needs of not only the customers, but the programs as well, helps direct efforts to those programs making the biggest impact. As grant proposals are prepared and eventually funded, the other four phases of the Change Management Model are well suited to successful funding, administration and evaluation of programs funded through grants. (National Fire Academy, 1999)

**LITERATURE REVIEW**

Grants are increasingly important to the "overall welfare" of most areas of the country. ("A Professional Point of View: Grants and Local Governments," 1999) The trend of budget reductions, rightsizing, outsourcing, staff extension, and doing more with less is going to be with the fire service for a while. (The Idea Bank, 1999) This trend affects the ability of the fire service to be proactive in its fire and life safety programs. Grants allow the progressive and creative fire department to offer new and innovative service and programs to its customers. (Slaughter, 1999)

Sources of grant money can be private or public. These two sources provide a total amount of assistance each year totaling over a quarter of a trillion dollars. ("A Professional Point of View: Grants and Local Governments," 1999) The amount of funding from private sources saw a one hundred percent increase from 1985 to 1996. The healthy economy was the most significant factor in this increase. (Slaughter, 1999) Money for programs seems to be very abundant at this time. Fire departments should take advantage of the wide-open window of opportunity to receive grant funding.

Grants are systematic development of external funding sources. The process may appear complex the first time the task of writing a grant proposal is undertaken. Being knowledgeable of the mechanics and process of grant development from idea formulation through administration of the funded program makes the whole process very simple. (McLean & Smith, 1999)

The grant proposal process can be broken down into six steps:

1.  Idea Formulation and/or Problem Identification

2.  Identification, Selection and Solicitation of External Funding Source

3. Proposal Preparation including Application Forms, Narrative and Budget

4. Proposal Submission

5. Proposal Acceptance or Rejection

6. Grant Administration or Proposal Revision and Resubmission

Many ideas may already exist in the minds of department members. "Ideas are the first step in finding funding." Ideas should be both encouraged and rewarded. ("TEN TIPS for organizing your organization," 1999) Formal assessment of needs using prepared surveys can be used; however, informal open-minded brainstorming is very successful in producing ideas for programs. Careful consideration should be given to ideas for programs without regard to the rank, seniority or experience of the member proposing the program. Even ideas from outside the organization should be considered. ("A Professional Point of View: Grants and Local Governments," 1999) Any idea for a program being considered should have four basic questions asked of the program idea. The first question asks are the chances of the proposal of the program idea good enough to be worth the time and effort? It may be hard to tell if the proposal will be funded the first time. One thing that must be determined is the overall worth of the grant to your department if it is awarded. A benefit/cost relationship should be determined before starting the proposal process. A $1000.00 grant that will cost $900.00 in time, manpower and expense in its preparation does not warrant the effort to seek the grant. The second question asks does the grant fit the goals and mission of your department? The department must be committed to the program. If it does not fit well into its goals or mission, it can quickly become a burden. The third question asks will the program be developed without hindering or changing the mission and goals of

the department?    This question can have two correct answers.  One being that it will not hinder or change the goals and mission of the department, but most likely it will help achieve or enhance them.  The second outcome could be it would change or redirect the department.  A reorganization or redevelopment of a division of the department could take place if a program for this is funded.  This question must be answered after much thought has gone into how the program will affect the department.  The fourth question asks is the program idea realistic and achievable, and is the challenge to be faced real or only perceived?  Funding of a program is but one step.  It is not the solution to all problems.  Much time, effort and commitment are devoted to the preparation and submission of a successful grant proposal.  The objectives and activities of the program must be accomplished. (McLean & Smith, 1998)

When an idea has been formulated and is agreed upon as a program with realistic and achievable goals, the search for a possible source of funding should be explored.  Fire service needs are generally divided into these four categories: training and education, public education and community outreach, facilities and equipment, and research and special projects. (Slaughter, 1999)  Each of these areas has the potential to receive funding.  Training and education may find funding for scholarships for educational conferences.  Public education and community outreach type programs may receive funds to develop and produce printed brochures, public service videos and other aspects of programs.  Vehicles, training facilities, special equipment, money for conducting scientific research and even new fire stations may be projects that could be funded.  A wide variety of fire service needs and interest have existing funding support from sources not normally identified as fire service supporters. (Slaughter, 1999)

Effective grant funding may take the identification of several different funding sources. This may be due to the cost of the program or its complexity. (McLean & Smith, 1998) Sources of potential external funding are generally categorized into one of the following three types with each having pros and cons. Foundation grants are one type. A foundation grant may be tailored for specific giving. One positive aspect is a grant that has been funded by a foundation is easier to receive a second funding. Another plus is local groups such as the fire department may garner much support from a local foundation. However, the time it takes to match a foundation with your needs and preparing a proposal may have a low payback in funds. The level of competition for these types of foundations' dollars are very high. Federal and state government grants are a type of funding source. Large amounts of money are usually available, and the possibility of multi-year funding and second funding is likely. These type grants will also offer a wide variety of funding areas. The grants are very competitive, use complicated applications with much "red tape" and their awarding may be very political. Grants from corporations have a potential for large amounts of funding. Corporations may be seeking tax breaks through charitable contributions. The potential for your program to enhance a corporation's image is another factor in securing a grant from a corporate source. The corporation grant requires significant amount of time be devoted to making personal contacts in a corporation. The program may be changed or tailored in order to fit the potential provider of the corporation grant. (McLean & Smith, 1998)

Part of the second step of grant proposals is the solicitation of external funding sources. A marketing plan of the fire department's services should be developed for this purpose. From the standpoint of marketability, a fire department's position is very

enviable.  The services provided are very necessary and well regarded by the public in general.  A paradox exists in the culture of the fire service.  One of the basic tenets of the fire service is "unselfish concern for the welfare of others at the risk of one's own welfare".  This unselfish concern often makes the fire service "shy away from the limelight".  Aggressive marketing of our services would appear selfish in nature.  The paradox lies in that without this marketing additional funding will not be available to support higher levels and sometime existing levels of service.  The fire service wonders why law enforcement receives such a lopsided share of funding.  These funds for law enforcement became available when the value of marketing what it did for the public and in some cases what it could do if funding was available was finally realized. (Slaughter, 1999)

The fire service must believe its cause is very worthwhile.  A marketing plan helps to achieve your goals.  The marketing plan should include an assessment of the opportunities for funding.  This requires being open to all forms and sources of information.  Articles in the print media may reveal interest in topics that are relative to a condition in the fire service.  Broadcast media typically is involved with very current topics.  It is the medium of instant reporting.  Look at these headlines to identify future trends that may produce beneficial programs and provide funding to pilot programs addressing these challenges.  The world-wide-web is an excellent source of information for potential programs and a great source to research funding sources beliefs, mission statements, resources and even proposal deadlines. (Slaughter, 1999)

The program idea must be thoroughly analyzed.  The grant proposal writer must read all the available literature of the subject area and look for persons having expertise

in the subject matter.  This could be people internal to your organization or external

such as speakers at conferences or workshops.  The thoughts and ideas of these

persons about the subject should be noted. (Belcher & Jacobsen, 1992)  Besides

subject matter experts, statistical data is important for some programs.  The data

collected may be used to provide support why the program is needed.  This data may

be collected from local sources such as local run reports or more broad sources such as

the United States Fire Administration, National Fire Protection Association, libraries,

almanacs and the world-wide-web.  This helps immensely with defining a problem

statement for a grant proposal. (Slaughter, 1999)

The problem addressed by a program may help in targeting certain likely funding

sources.  This could be the result of asking this question: What group will benefit the

most by funding your program?  This should be accomplished by research that indicates

what sources have missions that closely match your program idea.  The lack of an

abundance of funding sources directly related to the fire service requires creativity in the

interpretation of mission statements, organizational objectives and values and request

for grant proposals. (Slaughter, 1999)

Once a possible source is identified, a contact should be developed inside the

organization.  The most advantageous relationship with the contact is meeting them

face to face.  If this is not possible, establish a rapport with the person over the

telephone.  Five important pieces of information should be gathered from this contact:

1.  Who makes the funding decision?

2.  Who recommends funding?

3.  What are their backgrounds?

4.  What are the evaluation criteria?

5.  Can you get a copy of a successful proposal to use as an example?

The first three questions are important to know about the customer or the funding source being targeted by the grant proposal.  This helps with the proposal matching the needs of the customer.  They are convinced that "yours is the only, or best solution, to an unmet problem". (Slaughter, 1999)  The next major step in the grant proposal process is the preparation of the proposal.  Proposals can be of two types.  The first type is an unsolicited proposal where a program idea was developed, and the search is conducted for a potential source of funding.  The second type of proposal is a response to a Request for Proposal, Request for Qualifications or a Request for Application.  To develop projects meeting or satisfying the needs of the funding source and the objectives of your organization are called solicited proposals.  Proposals of both types should follow similar basic rules and expectations. (Slaughter, 1999)

Proposals should contain the same key elements whether they are for large complex programs or smaller less complicated programs.  An application packet is often provided that will ask questions covering these key elements.  If no application packet is provided, these elements must be provided to assure the grant proposal is complete. (McLean & Smith, 1998)  The key elements of a proposal should include a Cover Letter. This letter should introduce who you are and briefly describe the scope of the proposal. For solicited proposals the cover letter should explain how the submitted proposal meets the needs of the Request for Proposal.  A discussion of how the submitted proposal matches the mission of the funding organization should be included in the

cover letter of unsolicited proposals.  The cover letter should be similar to a resume cover letter.  It should give a description of the organization's background and experience while showcasing the positive aspects of the proposal.  The reviewers of a proposal get their first impression from this cover letter. (Slaughter, 1999)

A Title Page is the next element of a proposal. The program title should be brief but also include important words describing the project.  Doing this aids computer searches for bibliographies. (Belcher & Jacobsen, 1992)  The name of the program director, the name of the fire department, the address, the telephone number, date and name of the funding agency are also included on the title page.

Following the Title Page should be a Table of Contents.  It should be organized by section headings and sub-headings.  The page numbers where each section starts should be listed. (Belcher & Jacobsen, 1992)  Besides being a guide to find information in the proposal, it helps provide the reader with the proposal's overall organization. (6,p.31)  A listing of tables, graphs, figures or samples should be included when there is extensive use of the items in the proposal. (McLean & Smith, 1998)

The next several elements are the proposal's narrative section.  This narrative section should begin with an Abstract or Summary of the proposal.  It should describe "who you are, what you want, and what you are going to do". (Slaughter, 1999)  Anyone interested in the proposal should be able to read the summary and know exactly what has been proposed. (McLean & Smith, 1998)  Write the summary after the proposal's narrative has been completed.  An Introduction should follow next.  It should heighten the reader's interest and establish your credibility.  After the introduction, there should

be the Problem Statement.  It explains the nature, extent and need for the proposal

program. (Belcher & Jacobsen, 1992) Collected data, quotes and stories are used to be

convincing and compelling of the proposal's worthiness to address the problems or

needs identified in the proposed program. (McLean & Smith, 1998)  A Program

Description or Activities Plan should detail all actions and activities required for

completion of the program, and how each activity will be carried out.  This methodical

description is the what, how and who of the program.  The time frame for completion of

the program's goals should be included in the program description.  A timetable

graphically depicts the schedule for implementation of the program.  Specific

"benchmarks" of the program should be identified.  This is good not only for planning,

but also for evaluation of the program's progression towards its goals. (Slaughter, 1999)

Success of the program is the ultimate goal intended since the inception of the

idea.  How to measure the program's success is stated in the Evaluation Section of the

proposal narrative.  To allow the program's success to be easily recognizable, its

objectives should be specific and measurable. (Slaughter, 1999)

The fire department and its capabilities to carry out the program should be

highlighted in the Organizational Statement.  Included in this portion of the proposal's

narrative should be past achievements and experiences, the resources and community

support for such a program as the one being proposed.  Credibility and strength can be

added to the proposal by giving biographical sketches on the key person or persons

involved with the program  including background and experience.

The whole intent of the grant proposal process is to obtain funding for a program.

This request for funding should be translated into estimated expenses. (Slaughter,

1999)  A Budget must be well thought out and complete. (McLean & Smith, 1998)

Enough detail should be included in the budget of the proposal to indicate that the

needs of the program and potential problems have been addressed.  Serious grant

proposal writers will have calculated out regular staff costs,   overhead and operating

expenses.  To this, other direct expenses of the program are added. (Slaughter, 1999)

The budget should include any expected revenues from the program.  This may also

include cost sharing through "in-kind" contributions such as facilities and supplies.

These "in-kind" contributions are indirect cost money for a program.  Matching funds are

cash outlays made by the proposed program's organization.  Using the amount of these

funds the funding organization sets a ratio to fund the program.  This should be included

in the budget. (Belcher & Jacobsen, 1992)  Funding agencies often desire a cost/benefit

analysis of a program.  This can be part of the budget as a sub-heading. (Slaughter,

1999)

The final element of a proposal's narrative is a statement about the future of the

program if funded.  It answers the following question: Will the money spent have a

viable impact?  It should describe the expected life and maintenance of a proposed

piece of equipment, and predict the length of time a training program will remain a valid

educational tool.

Before submission of the grant proposal, take the time to evaluate its probable

success.  In a grant proposal writing workshop presented by The Idea Bank, a list of six

evaluation criteria was presented.  It is suggested a third person be given the list of

evaluation criteria and have this person compare the proposal against the following list:

1.  Demonstrates a need for the project or request.

2. Shows subject matter expertise.

3. Describes cooperative relationships with other agencies or interests.

4. Describes the quality of key personnel involved in the project.

5. Shows evaluation method.

6. Demonstrates cost effectiveness and realistic budgets.

All six criteria should be answered affirmatively when the proposal is compared against them.  If not, the proposal should be re-evaluated for what is missing. (The Idea Bank, 1999)  If the proposal passes this evaluation, submitting the proposal is the next step.  Instructions as to how and when the proposal is to be submitted must be carried out precisely.  Adhere to deadlines for submission.  Some deadlines give dates by which the funding agency must receive the proposal.  Other deadlines only require a proposal be postmarked by a certain day. (McLean & Smith, 1998)  Exceptions to the rules and deadlines should not be requested and should not be expected.  Many grant proposals are received by a funding agency.  Competitiveness of the proposals causes strict adherence to the rules and deadlines to be a necessity.

The fifth and sixth steps are interrelated.  Once the proposal is submitted, the process is to wait for the acceptance or rejection of the proposal.  If the proposal is rejected, ask the funding agency why it was rejected.  This is an excellent source of information to revise and strengthen a proposal.  Submit it again to the funding agency, or find another suitable funding agency and submit the proposal to them. (McLean & Smith, 1998)  If the grant proposal is funded, now it must be administered.

Many funding agencies have specific requirements for the submission of progress and expense reports.  All reports should be promptly and satisfactorily

completed. (McLean & Smith, 1998)  If the funding agency does not have specific reporting requirements, it is suggested monthly and quarterly reports be developed. Consistency in the reports' format should be adhered.  A final report should be submitted to the funding agency once the program is completed.  The final report tells them how things were done, and what the outcome of the program was.  Any additional benefits or extras should be reported along with the success or failure of the program. (The Idea Bank, 1999)

The process of developing an idea for a grant proposal, preparing the proposal and administering a funded proposal is lengthy.  Once a successfully funded proposal has been written the next one is easier.  This encouragement is found in most of the literature pertaining to successful grant proposal writing.

## PROCEDURES

The results presented in the research were formulated from attending a workshop on grant writing presented by The Idea Bank, a literature review of current information and a personal review of how funding is provided for programs in the Richmond Fire Department.

The Idea Bank workshop was presented on Friday, September 17, 1999, at the Ohio State Fire Academy located in Reynoldsburg, Ohio.  The workshop was titled "Grant Writing That Gets Results".  The workshop speaker was Randy Slaughter of Dragonfly Communications.  This workshop gave me my first real knowledge of

successful grant proposal writing and the necessity of problem analysis and planning before a program can be developed.

After choosing the topic of research in August 1999, the collection of information relating to the writing of grant proposals was initiated. This began in the Learning Resource Center of the National Fire Academy. Further research was conducted at the University of Texas at Arlington Library and by searching the world-wide-web for sites containing information about grant proposal writing. The personal review of the Richmond Fire Department's methods of funding a project led to discussions with other fire department members concerning how money had been provided for purchases of special equipment and what were some of the needs for programs in the department.

There are limitations to the research that should be noted. The amount of literature specifically directed at grant proposal writing for the funding of fire service programs is very small. There is a considerable amount of information about education and research grant proposals. This is a large part of funding in the academic world. Since no formal guidelines exist for development of programs in the Richmond Fire Department, informal discussions were the only source of gathering information from others as I assessed the Richmond Fire Department's program funding procedures. The completion of an applied research project for each course of the Executive Fire Officer Program must be completed within six months of completion of the course. This translates into finding sources and quickly judging their relevance to the research being conducted.

**RESULTS**

**<u>Answers to Research Questions</u>**

<u>Research Question I.</u>  What are the initial factors an organization should consider when beginning the grant proposal process?

The organization should develop ideas for programs that are needs that are not being funded or that should be better funded because of the level of service needed to be provided through these programs.

<u>Research Question 2.</u>  What are the main elements of a Grant Proposal?

The grant proposal should contain the following list of elements.

1. Cover Letter

2. Title Page

3. Table of Contents

4. Abstract

5. Introduction

6. Problem Statement

7. Description of Program Activities

8. Organization Statement

9. Timetable

10. Budget

11. Future of the Project Statement

<u>Research Question 3.</u> What are the elements that affect a grant proposal being funded or not?

Attention to detail is a must for successful funding of grant proposals.  All rules, guidelines and instructions for preparing or submitting a particular request should be followed.  Information provided should be clear and concise and as accurate as possible.  Do not hesitate to point to positive achievements of the department.  Make certain that the program matches the goals and mission of your department as well as the possible funding agency.  Evaluate the program as to whether the program is realistic and is able to be accomplished.   Persistence and hard work along with demonstrating a commanding knowledge of the program's subject help to market your proposal to the funding agency.

**DISCUSSION**

The need for funding sources for programs is well understood in today's climate of budgetary constraints.  The recommendations developed are consistent with information resulting from the research of grant proposal writing.  Common themes of analysis, planning, implementation and evaluation were present in all the research information.

There are many sources for funding programs through grants.  The need for analysis of ideas for possible programs leads to the search for possible funding sources.  Funding sources should not be limited to those that may have historically been given to the fire service.  There are a wide variety of sources that have missions and goals that relate to the fire service's needs and interests. (Slaughter, 1999) Funding sources are looking for programs to further their organization's mission.

Besides wanting a program to reflect their beliefs, they also look to how organized and planned is the grant proposal. This may be used as an indicator of how well the program will be administered. ("A Professional Point of View: Grants and Local Governments," 1999) Funding from grants is no different in some aspects as obtaining funding for a fire department's operating budget. Needs are developed and supporting information is given as to how the funding will address the needs. One of the most important concepts learned from this study is the importance of planning in every phase. Ideas are plentiful, but they never make it to the stage of a developed program because of the lack of planning.

As an organization, the Richmond Fire Department is well trained and suited to respond quickly to changing and demanding events. The culture of the organization is to be reactionary. Planning and organizing must be a more prevalent feature of the department's culture. Due to the nature of emergencies, planning may only be along a narrow path to achieve a goal quickly and efficiently. The widening of the viewpoint of planning should be helpful to the fire department's efforts to receive funding through grants. Then only can the negative impact of a lack of funds to accomplish goals be overcome.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

Grants providing external funding sources for programs of the Richmond Fire Department are needed to be able to provide professional, efficient and innovative programs to our customers. The fire department can become successful at receiving funding from grant proposals by implementing changes.

No written or formal guidelines exist as to how a person's idea for a program or piece of equipment is funded. This must change to be truly successful at having grant proposals funded. My recommendation is that the Richmond Fire Department implements a program for development of ideas for grant proposals. The key points of the program are listed below:

1. Organize frequent brainstorming sessions among members. All participants should be allowed to express problems and needs. They should also be encouraged to offer solutions to the problems and needs.

2. From the brainstorming sessions, develop a focus group to thoroughly analyze ideas that are deemed important by those at the brainstorming sessions. They should analyze the concept of the program or purchase for relevance to the fire department's goals and likelihood of the program being accomplished.

3. Basic training in grant proposal writing should be provided to key personnel who have a good knowledge base of varied areas of the fire service.

4. Develop a format for financial records which will allow quick access to cost information. Personnel cost, operating cost and supply cost are some of the

information to be maintained for ease of budget calculations when preparing proposals.

5. Develop a sample grant proposal for the fire department. This should provide each grant proposal writer with accurate and consistent information about the department, its history, accomplishments and mission.

6. Have all grant proposals reviewed by a person or persons from outside the department. A person with some knowledge of both the fire service and the funding agency would be helpful. Use any evaluation criteria information provided by the funding agency or a generic set of criteria.

7. Develop a marketing plan. It should raise public awareness of a program's need and seek community support.

8. Prepare formal guidelines for accepting and receiving of funds, accounting of expenditures and reporting of a program's progress.

9. Evaluate the performance of funded programs in comparison to its initial stated goals. Decisions, such as the request for more funds, can be made from the evaluations.

10. Do not abandon ideas from proposals not funded. Analyze where the proposal may have been weak and develop measures to strengthen the proposal. Then resubmit or submit it to another appropriate funding agency.

The Strategic Management of Change course of the executive officer program teaches the skills necessary to manage the process of grant proposal writing. Certainly fire departments like the Richmond Fire Department will benefit from the implementation of external funding for programs. It is a major change in the way funding has historically

been received.  Personnel that have the knowledge to both lead and manage change

must be involved in the grant writing proposal process.

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